

Sedalia Weekly Conservator.

VOL. 1.

SEDALIA, MISSOURI, FRIDAY, November 15 1903.

NO. 28

A PART OF HISTORY OF THE NEGRO PLOT OF 1741

In The Early Days Of New York.

Prof. George F. Comfort, director of the Museum of Fine Arts at Syracuse, N. Y., an article contributed to the Herald of that city, recalls and describes an extraordinary outbreak of ferocity in what is now the city of New York 160 years ago, wherein negroes were the victims of mob fury, and were hanged and burned in public places, with a crowd looking on and with the full countenance and, indeed, by order of the authorities. It is a matter quite forgotten in the North and not much considered when it is brought to mind that slavery was not always sectional, and this story may show us that North and South, we are made of the same clay, and that under similar circumstances similar results must have happened above. Mason and Dixon's line has happened below that magical latitude.

Professor Comfort is of old Holland ancestry, and it was in tracing the genealogy of his family that he came upon a very rare and curious book by one, Daniel Horsmanden, entitled, "The New York Conspiracy; or, a History of the Negro Plot, With the Journal of Proceedings Against the Conspirators at New York in the Years 1741-2," etc. This was republished in 1810. It does not appear that there really was any such plot, but there was a rumor of a plot, which, says Professor Comfort, was "magnified by popular fear and rage into a general conspiracy of the negro slaves to burn New York, murder the white man and take the white women for wives and then set up an independent government by secret assistance from Spain and France." The account in this book, he says, records "the darkest blot on the history of the Anglo-Saxon race on the American continent. The whole, event, as here described, reads like one of the terrific outbursts of unbridled passion during the European Middle Ages, and seems incredible as occurring only 160 years ago with in the territory of what is now the proud metropolis of the greatest and freest republic the world has ever seen."

New York was a small place in 1741—nothing more than a fairly big town considering the youth of the country, and the events were atrocious because not only the "best citizens" took part in the affair, but all the machinery of government was bent the same way, and without evidence of the slightest value as to the existence of any sort of a plot, the officials themselves entered on a prosecution devoid of any element of fairness, smitten by a rage of destruction. "All the members of the bar," says Prof. Comfort, "combined in devising the conduct of the persecution. No legal counsel was granted the accused whom their poverty, ignorance

and fright could make no adequate defense and fell easy prey."

The entire slave population, numbering 2,000 (Hildreth says 1,200 or 1,500) when the whole population of city was but 7,000 were accused of being engaged in this fictitious plot. The people were alarmed by the occurrence of nine fires in rapid succession most of which were the burning out of foul chimneys. A woman indentured to service bought her liberty by giving false tales of a plot by her master, was reinforced by a woman of the street a tavern keeper, and three negroes, to burn the city and murder the whites, and she was reinforced by a woman of the streets under conviction for a robbery, who turned informer and secured her safety. Under the stress of fear many negroes confessed what never happened, and then accused others. There were thirteen negroes burned at the stake, eighteen were hanged and seventy-one transported. Money rewards immunity from punishment were offered to any who would turn "king's witnesses." Antipathies of religion as well as of race were drawn into the obsession of the evil spirit. The descendant of the Dutch colonists remembered Alva and the sufferings of their ancestors in their great struggle for liberty, so that Roman Catholics were subjects of suspicion, and a harmless teacher of languages was charged with being a priest in disguise and a stimulator of the supposed conspiracy. "Despite his lucid, unaided defense and his pathetic plea, both given in this book, he was convicted and hanged."

Professor Comfort is particularly affected by the fact that two of the slaves owned by his ancestor, Gerardus Comfort, were condemned, with four other negroes to be "chained to a stake and burned until they should be several dead." One of them was thus burned; the other turned king's witness and made a confession which implicated others, both black and whites, and secured the commuting of his sentence to transportation. All the ground there was for his story was that negroes and others used to meet at Gerardus Comfort, well for visits and frolics, and it was charged that there were meetings held at his cooper's shop, in whose yard the well was, for promoting the conspiracy. Gerardus Comfort, who was a Quaker, gave his quiet testimony with out effect. It was near his shop that Mary Burton, the indentured servant above referred to, served ale in a cobbler's shop and much disliked to serve blacks. When the governor proclaimed his rewards of money, manumission and so on to any informers, this woman accepted \$100, and on her palably false testimony

her master, the cobbler, and his wife, as also John Ury, the supposed Roman Catholic priest, were hanged. A daughter of the cobbler also turned king's witness to save her neck. Two slaves, already tied to the stake, were offered pardon if they would confess. They both broke down and began their pitiful false stories, but the crowd grew impatient at the threatened loss of their luxury and set fire to the fagots. Yet this "officially suborned testimony, obtained under so revolting circumstances, was employed for convicting others, white and black." Professor Comfort's tale from the Horsmanden book, recites many instances of the same abominable character.

Professor Comfort also recalls to memory a scare of the same sort which occurred in New York in 1712. He sums up the results of the "plot" in 1741 by saying: "As a ghastly, but fitting, conclusion to this weird tragedy, general Thanksgiving services were held in the churches of New York on Sept. 12, 1742, to render thanks to God for thus mercifully saving the city from the dread disaster which the panic-stricken inhabitants believed to have hung like a direful pall over their doomed city."—Ex.

Bro. Mack states that there were no committees appointed to conduct the church fair, but that it was the work of the "Blue Ribbon Club", and they had no committee on speakers; but that it was the work of an individual by the consent of the President of the club. This statement, and an understanding of some minor things, compels us to exonerate the church and Bro. Mack from all blames, and pledge to him and the church our moral and financial support—inasmuch as we can without injuring any other institution of its kind in the community.

Dr. I. B. Scott, A. M., D. D., Editor of the Southwestern Advocate New Orleans La. was a very pleasant visitor to our city last Friday and Saturday.

Dr. Scott who was attending a committee meeting in Kansas City, came over at the earnest solicitation of Pres. Lowe, and addressed a appreciative audience of students and citizen, in the G. R. Smith College Chapel Friday night.

The Dr. is a man of great power in high church circles, and recognized as the most brilliant as well as the most fearless editor of the Negro Race.

He did not choose a special subject but spoke along general lines encourage the young people to equip themselves for the many opportunities that are presented to us almost daily.

He spoke of the different avocations that open themselves, one at a time, to the negro, first: in the profession came the ministerial, second medical, third law, lastly, the entire race is turning its attention to the business and commercial world. The Negro is running an operating business of their own, in almost every town in the U. S. He said he had had the pleasure of visiting 6 large banks owned by Negroes, riding on the new Negro Street Car line

in Jacksonville Fla. owned by Negroes, and various other enterprises too numerous to mention.

He particularly emphasized the fact of character development, and thoroughness in all of our school work, and when prepared the place was awaiting us.

While in the city he was the guest of Prof. and Mrs. H. L. Billups, who are warm personal friends of him.

Rumors afloat to the effect that Elder Frank Crawford, evangelist of the church of God and saints of Christ, had shot and killed his wife in Kansas City, has caused those connected with his church here no little annoyance. For the benefit of those concerned we publish the following extracts from a letter to Mr. John F. Wilhite.

KANSAS CITY, MO.,

Nov. 6th. 1903.

Dear Saint Wilhite:—My wife is living with me. Don't worry about me, I know the devil is busy; but you know I would not break the law of Christ, dear brother, Tell the people I am not a murderer. Sister Mattie Crawford is well. Elder Frank Crawford.

BLACKBURN.

Mr. Hub and Mase McGuthrie made their weekly visit to Sweet Springs last Wednesday.

Rev. Burns made a business trip to Marshall Friday returning Saturday.

Maud Jackson made a flying trip to Mt. Leonard Wednesday.

Anna May Carter was in Alma Thursday.

Mrs. Mamie Johnson visited in Alma Thursday.

Will Brown Maud Jackson and Willie Henderson were in Alma Thursday.

Mr. Groves Brooks is quite hoarse this week, we hope Mr. Brooks voice will soon clear up as he has quite a swift tongue with all the ladies.

Mr. George Seals received a telegram stating the death of his niece Jennie Myrl who was attending college in Memphis Tenn. the remains will be brought to Mt. Leonard Thursday and will be buried in Salt Pond Sunday.

NEW FRANKFORT.

Miss Lulu B. Hogan spent last week in Glasgow and vicinity visiting relatives and friends.

Wilbur Nichols who has been on the sick list the past week is convalescent, and is in school a gain.

New Frankfort is improving as fast as any of Saline's towns. New houses being built constructed by carpenters of our race.

Mr. Cen Vaughn who is doing a nice job on one of our new buildings, is about to complete it.

Our churches are among the successful number.

We had rain four days last week.

Mr. John Yancy one of East Saline prominent farmers living 3 miles from here sold his farm and had a clearance sale Tuesday, it was largely attended by white and colored everything sold high, he and family left Saturday for Des Moines Iowa which will be their future home. We his friends regret to give them up, but wish them success in their new home in the North.

Rev. Emerson pastor of First Free-Will Baptist Church had his rally Sunday and reports good success, spiritually and financially, his church has just finished a nice plastering job conducted by its grand leaders Mr. and Mrs. St Clair and Tuly, assisted by other members and friends.

Rev. Morgan pastor of Missionary Baptist Church is carrying on a revival and is having good success, his church completed a nice job of ceiling their church last week. They are now preparing for Thanksgiving, the arrangements being made by its grand leader Mrs. Grant Moore.

Mr. and Mrs. James M. Jackson received his shipment of furniture from Kansas City Saturday. It adds a beautiful decoration to his home. He will exhibit again in a few weeks in the west his son who is turning white will bill his cities and towns soon.

Miss Mary J. Stevenson our proficient teacher spent Saturday and Sunday with her parents in Sweet Springs and reports a most pleasant visit, found her people anxiously awaiting her arrival. She is doing a grand school work in our town, has perfect order, good attendance and more to come.

BOSTON CAFE.

Furnishes All Grocers with

DELICIOUS, FRESH.

HOME-MADE BREAD.

Don't forget to ask for

Walch's Bread.

We also lead in the production of ICE CREAM.

FOR PICTURES OF SCENES IN THIS COUNTY.

Have you a good photograph of fine scenery, beautiful farm home notable live stock, anything in short that will be conspicuously representative of this county as different from other Missouri counties? If so the Missouri World's Fair Commission may be able to use it in the \$50,000 volume upon the resources of the state which the Commission will publish. The official photographer of the commission Arnold Shanklin, will visit this county taking photographs of school-houses and school children together with other photographs. There are, however, doubtless other photographs in existence, which show picturesque natural scenery, attractive homes or buildings and other things, taken at favorable times and under favorable weather conditions which the Commission might be able to include in its description of this county. Walter Williams, Supt. of Publication, Administration Building, World's Fair, St. Louis would be glad to receive copies of such photographs.